

**Meeting date:** 14 March 2023

**Report to:** Stronger Communities and Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Board

**Report title:** Solihull VCSE Strategic Assessment

**Report from:** Alison McGrory, Assistant Director for Communities and Partnerships

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**Wards affected:**

- All Wards |  Bickenhill |  Blythe |  Castle Bromwich |  Chelmsley Wood |  Dorridge/Hockley Heath |  Elmdon |  Kingshurst/Fordbridge |  Knowle |  Lyndon |  Meriden |  Olton |  Shirley East |  Shirley South |  Shirley West |  Silhill |  Smith's Wood |  St Alphege
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**Public/private report:** Public

**Exempt by virtue of paragraph:** Not exempt

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**1. Executive Summary**

- 1.1 To update Scrutiny Board members on the progress being made in creating a strategic assessment of the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sectors in Solihull. The draft document is at Appendix 1.

**2. Decision(s) Recommended**

- 2.1 The Scrutiny Board is asked to note the contents of the report and provide comments.

**Report Title:** Solihull VCSE Strategic Assessment

**3. Matters for Consideration**

- 3.1 In August 2021, the process of creating a VCSE Strategic Assessment for Solihull started, to create a better profile the breadth and depth of organisations and their contribution to the borough.
- 3.2 There were several reasons why this work commenced:
  - 3.2.1 To support the Council Plan, specifically its priorities and intentions concerning “connected and engaged communities and a vibrant VCS”.
  - 3.2.2 The pandemic changed the behaviour of individuals and communities, but also created risks and issues for the financial sustainability for parts of the VCSE sectors. Planning for the future will require understanding of the effects of the pandemic.
  - 3.2.3 There are opportunities to benchmark the Solihull VCSE sectors with the region and the national picture, which can help develop some appreciation of what is distinctive about Solihull, where we are strong and where there is room for development and investment.
  - 3.2.4 The assessment will enable better approaches to public sector commissioning and volunteering, by recognising where there are the skills, people, services and organisations to support and invest in, to promote thriving communities, social value and local economic benefit.
  - 3.2.5 The information about where there are potential gaps and areas for development can help to inform Solihull Community and Voluntary Action (CAVA) infrastructure role.
  - 3.2.6 To promote better understanding of the VCSE and how they differ from each other but also where they come together for community benefit.
  - 3.2.7 To promote the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities.
- 3.3 The terms of reference for the strategic assessment were created by a steering group consisting of representations from across the Council (Business Intelligence, Housing and Communities, Commissioners in Public Health, Adult Social Care and Children’s Services) and Solihull CAVA and the VCS Reference Group.
- 3.4 The first iteration of Solihull’s VCSE Strategic Assessment is attached as Appendix 1.

**4. What options have been considered and what is the evidence telling us about them?**

- 4.1 This first iteration is based upon what can be produced within existing resources and available data. This is to see what might be possible and to then consider where additional investment of effort and resources may be needed. It is now evident that the Council will need to introduce a number of new data collection practices with its partners, in order to produce a document of sufficient quality to support the Council’s aims.

4.2 The next stages for this process will see new data collection processes introduced during 2023/24. This will enable a version 2.0 to be produced towards the end of 2023/24.

## 5. Reasons for recommending preferred option

5.1 Producing a VCSE Strategic Assessment is a sizeable and complex task. At a national level, the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) produces a regular almanac, which is comparable to the type of document which might be of value in Solihull. This requires significant amounts of resources to produce but reflects the national benefit. A similar proportioned effort in Solihull is needed to develop and analyse the data that is available and present it for local stakeholders. This will need to be delivered through a number of phases.

## 6. Implications and Considerations

6.1 State how the proposals in this report contribute to the priorities in the [Council Plan](#):

Priority:	Contribution:
<p>People and Communities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improving outcomes for children and young people in Solihull.</li> <li>2. Good quality, responsive, and dignified care and support for Adults in Solihull when they need it.</li> <li>3. Take action to improve life chances and health outcomes in our most disadvantaged communities.</li> <li>4. Enable communities to thrive.</li> </ol>	<p>VCSE organisations are engaged in activity across these priorities. Better knowledge and understanding will help to inform how the Council works with VCSE organisations for better outcomes for communities, children, young people, families, older adults and to improve life chances in the most disadvantaged communities.</p>
<p>Economy:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Develop and promote the borough's economy, with a focus on revitalising our town and local centres.</li> <li>6. Maximising the opportunities of UK Central and HS2.</li> <li>7. Increase the supply of affordable and social housing that is environmentally sustainable.</li> </ol>	<p>Also relevant to VCSE activity within the arts and culture sector and the employment and skills sectors.</p>
<p>Environment:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8. Enhance our natural environment, improve air quality and reduce net carbon emissions.</li> </ol>	<p>None</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9. Promote employee wellbeing</li> </ol>	<p>None</p>

## 6.2 Consultation and Scrutiny:

6.2.1 This first version of the Strategic Assessment was developed under the oversight of a steering group consisting of officer representatives from Business Intelligence, Housing and Communities, Children's Services (commissioning), Adult Social Care (commissioning) and Public Health (commissioning), as well as representatives from Solihull CAVA and the VCS Reference Group.

## 6.3 Financial implications:

6.3.1 There are no financial implications. The development of the VCSE Strategic Assessment will progress within existing resources.

## 6.4 Legal implications:

6.4.1 There are no legal implications.

## 6.5 Risk implications, including Risk Appetite:

6.5.1 The main risk is in how the data and insights are interpreted. The document shines a spotlight on the VCSE sectors, creating questions and lines of enquiry for the Council to consider in how it works with, supports and invests, in local groups and organisations. It cannot provide definite answers or conclusions. However, there is a risk that some readers might draw conclusions and create narratives that are not consistent with what is happening in the borough.

6.5.2 To mitigate this risk, it is being made clear that creating the strategic assessment will be an iterative process and that there is some length still to travel before there is a good usable document to draw recommendations from. This is communicated clearly in the Executive Summary and "draft" will remain on the document until it is finalised within the next couple of years.

## 6.6 Equality implications:

6.6.1 The document will provide more insight for the Council to help it discharge its equality and diversity duties.

## 6.7 Linkages to our work with the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), Local Enterprise Partnership or the Birmingham & Solihull Integrated Care System (ICS):

6.7.1 The information produced through this process will be of value to the ICS.

## **7. List of appendices referred to**

7.1 Appendix 1 - Solihull Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sectors Strategy Assessment version 1.0

## **8. Background papers used to compile this report**

8.1 Solihull Place Survey 2022

## **9. List of Other Relevant Documents**

- 9.1 UK CIVIL SOCIETY ALMANAC 2022 - <https://www.ncvo.org.uk/news-and-insights/news-index/uk-civil-society-almanac-2022>